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3 4-H TAILORING SCHOOLS FOR LOCAL LEADERS /1

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Wool garments are important wardrobe items in Massachusetts and are expensive to buy. The climate calls for warm winter clothes. The woolen mills in this section of the country made it possible to obtain "mill ends" of material at prices well below the cost of the cheapest ready-to-wear woolens. This situation, together with rising prices, brought about requests for coat schools from the 4-H Club leaders. They had heard of the schools the clothing specialist and agent had held for leaders of women's clubs and groups of interested women who wanted to learn tailoring.

Conducting the School

Thirty-seven local leaders from 8 counties attended 3 tailoring schools conducted by the State clothing specialist in 3 sections of the State during June and July 1941. The regular attendance at this time of the year during the training period of 5 weeks reflects the need and the interest of the local leaders in a school of this type. The school consisted of 6 weekly meetings from 10:30 in the morning to 4:00 in the afternoon. The meetings were held in a large room of suitable size where all necessary equipment, such as sewing machines and pressing equipment, was brought in from the homes. These were the first schools of their kind in which the local leaders actually made a garment following the techniques discussed and demonstrated during the meetings. They made a coat of new or old material (lined or interlined); or, a lined suit jacket.

The local leaders were homemakers about 45 years of age and had been 4-H leaders about 4 years. Some knew very little about tailoring and others were fairly good. Previous to attending the school each leader who was planning to attend was sent a bulletin on making a coat and a letter containing general information, suggestions on woolen garments to be made, materials to bring along and the tailoring techniques to be taken up. At each of the meetings these techniques were discussed and demonstrated by the clothing specialist and questions answered. The leaders worked on the garments they had chosen and were given individual and group instruction as the need arose. The leaders were advised to refer to their coat bulletins and make necessary notes. Between the weekly meetings the leaders worked on their garments and at the following meetings raised questions on things which they were in doubt. Instruction in buying wool garments and the identifying of quality in construction and material was integrated with the instruction in the techniques of tailoring.

/1 One of a series of case histories prepared for use in the Conference To Outline the Contribution of Extension Methods and Techniques Toward the Rehabilitation of War-torn Countries, held in Washington, D.C., Sept. 19-22, 1944. Extension Service and Office of Foreign Agricultural Relations cooperating.

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Techniques of Tailoring

Techniques of tailoring are not well known by the general population. They are usually hidden in the construction of the garment and are not easy to identify but many of them are not difficult after some instruction and practice. Emphasis in the schools was placed on the practical techniques which could be used to make quality garments that would look like professionally made garments and avoiding the "home-made look."

Nineteen major techniques were discussed including: (1) Standards of quality in coats and coat materials; (2) how to select old and new materials; (3) how to select linings; (4) methods of preparing materials, - ripping, laundering, dyeing, mending, and shrinking; (5) equipment necessary for tailoring; (6) taking measurements; (7) checking pattern measurements; (8) use of patterns; (9) cutting a coat; (10) making worked buttonholes; (11) making piped buttonholes; (12) making button loops; (13) making pockets; (14) sewing on buttons; (15) making collars and cuffs; (16) shaping collar and lapels; (17) putting in a hem; (18) attaching a lining; (19) pressing a coat.

Measuring the Results

Measuring the results by observations of the leaders at work and the quality of the garments made gave some indication of the value of the school. A further and more comprehensive evaluation was made. At the close of the last meeting the leaders were given a survey blank to indicate how much (None, Very Little, Some, Much, Very Much) they knew about each tailoring technique before the meetings and how much they knew afterwards. Both measurements of their opinions were made after the meetings because, in the past, leaders at training meetings have frequently said they had not realized how little they knew about the topics of the meetings. If measurements of this kind had been made at the beginning and again at the end of the schools unconsciously biased results would have been obtained. Care, of course, was taken to impress upon the leaders that unless they gave their frank and honest judgment the survey would be worthless.

The following charts show the improvement in 10 of the 19 techniques discussed. These were chosen for the report because they included those showing the highest and least improvement, the highest and lowest beginning points and represented the range of techniques used in making a woolen coat. The remaining 9 techniques showed similar results.

Amount Local Leaders Knew About Each Topic Discussed
in 4-H Tailoring School

Percent Reporting "Much" and "Very Much"

		0	25	50	75	100
Standards of quality in coats and coat materials	' Before	8	xx			
	' After	89	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXX	XXXXXX	XXXXXX
Dyeing	' Before	4	xx			
	' After	28	XXXXXX	XXXXXX		

Amount Local Leaders Knew About Each Topic Discussed
in 4-H Tailoring School (Cont'd)

Percent Reporting "Much" and "Very Much"

		0	25	50	75	100
Shrinking new materials	Before	31	XXXXXX			
	After	89	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXXXXXX		
Equipment neces- sary for tailoring	Before	23	XXXXXX			
	After	95	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXXXXXX	
Use of patterns	Before	33	XXXXXX			
	After	92	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXXXXXX	
Cutting a coat	Before	16	XXXXXX			
	After	89	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXXXXXX	
Making piped buttonholes	Before	22	XXXXXX			
	After	92	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXXXXXX	
Shaping collars and lapels	Before	8	XXX			
	After	84	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXXXXXX	
Putting in a hem	Before	20	XXXXXX			
	After	77	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXXXXXX	
Pressing a coat	Before	14	XXXXXX			
	After	86	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXXXXXX	

Leaders learn by doing with guidance

Little improvement was made in dyeing as compared with the very large improvement in the other techniques. In this case none of the leaders did any dyeing of materials in the schools; nor was dyeing demonstrated. However, dyeing of materials was discussed to some extent, an outline presented and samples of dyeing shown. The difference in results on dyeing and the other techniques suggests the instructional value of having participants actually perform the techniques in conjunction with other methods of teaching.

Follow-up Study

During the summer of 1942 a follow-up study was conducted to determine the use the 4-H leaders made of the tailoring information during the intervening year. Thirty-one of the 37 leaders trained the year before reported in the follow-up study in some way. Thirty of the 31 leaders reported using the information learned. Sixteen leaders taught techniques of tailoring to their 4-H clothing club girls who made suits, skirts, and other woolen garments. Five leaders were called upon to give help on tailoring information to homemakers in adult extension groups. Twenty-five leaders gave help on tailoring to friends and neighbors. The homes of these

leaders became community centers of information. The indirect influence of extension teaching was large.

Thirty leaders used the techniques learned in doing their own sewing. Twenty-five of them made woolen garments, such as coats, skirts, suits, jackets and dresses. Eighteen leaders made over used woolen garments. Twenty-three leaders said the help in tailoring made them better buyers of yardage and ready-to-wear.

Most of the local leaders used each of the various kinds of tailoring information received at the training school. The information on dyeing materials, however, was used only by 7 leaders. It is interesting to note that in the 1941 study a comparatively small percent of the leaders had indicated that they had learned much about dyeing materials at the tailoring school. Dyeing materials was discussed at the tailoring schools, an outline was presented and samples of dyeing shown, but ^{no} demonstration on dyeing was given nor did leaders have an opportunity to dye materials under supervision. Seven of the leaders indicated that they had used dyeing information since the tailoring school. The results of the two studies substantiate each other and bear out an important teaching principle: on the instructional value of having participants actually perform the techniques in conjunction with other methods of teaching.

Attending a tailoring school gave the leaders a confidence in themselves that they did not have before. Twenty-seven leaders felt they were "much" better able to eliminate the "home-made" look in garments they sewed and 26 of them felt they were "much" better able to select good quality ready-to-wear garments. The leaders who attended the training schools are a potential source of trained voluntary leadership scattered over the States.

Reference: Results of 4-H Tailoring Schools for Local Leaders, Massachusetts 1941 - Page, Forbes and Frutchey.

Follow-Up Study of 4-H Tailoring Schools for Local Leaders, Massachusetts 1942 - Page, Forbes, and Frutchey